Seniors are a diverse group of people: a challenging feature for the tourism market

On 18th of September, 2014 the Final Conference "„Developing Senior Tourism in Remote Regions – Experiences and the Way Forward" was organized at the Committee of the Regions, in Brussels. The primary goal of this conference was to inform about the successful results of the project by introducing best good practice transfers. The research on the needs of local and foreign senior tourists is done and 55 good practices have been collected to offer good ideas how to improve senior tourism model in the Europe. TOURAGE project was described as a project with a unique topic and intense interregional exchange process and dissemination activities by representative of the INTERREG IVC Joint Technical Secretariat.

In the conference it was stated that seniors are a diverse group of people with different health conditions, expectations, interests and needs. The tourism market should be developed so that it is able to respond to the needs of senior tourists. *"By activating seniors and involving them in local life of our municipalities, this would be mutually beneficial process for both sides: seniors and municipalities"* said Mr. Edvīns Bartkevičs, Alternate Member of the Latvian delegation to the Committee of the Regions. He encouraged involving seniors in the product development process.

Mr. Pedro Ortún, Director for Service Industries from the European Commission declared that during the next 5-6 years tourism will be one of the priorities in the Europe and funds will be opened to develop it further. He stressed that it is important to pay attention to the development of tourism in remote regions and increase of tourist flows in the low-season.

Additionally Mrs. Julia Wadoux from the AGE Platform Europe stated that it is important to invite not only seniors but also disabled persons and other active citizens to evaluate accessible tourism destinations and attractions with inclusive design in order to make tourism process participative and socially inclusive.

Stated in Final Conference of TOURAGE project

(click on the sentence to read more)

„By activating seniors and involving them in local life of our municipalities, this would be mutually beneficial process for both sides: seniors and municipalities." (Mr. Edvīns Bartkevičs, CoR)

„You are encouraged to avoid stigmatisation of senior groups and to make more intergenerational tourism proposals for two or more generations." (Ms. Julia Wadoux, Age platform Europe)

„Studies on the needs of seniors are needed in order to be able to develop services and products for the segment." (Dr. Pentti Hyttinen, Finland)

„The enrichment of interregional cooperation and contribution of policy learning in all EU regions are two main interrelated actions in INTERREG EUROPE." (Mr.Akos Szabo, INTERREG IVC JTS)

„Thematic Thursdays are organized for seniors to meet experts and rise knowledge about different topics in our region." (Mr. Jarosław Reczek, Poland)

„Now seniors are incorporated in the sports programme of the region of Lake Balaton." (Mr. István Hegedűs, Hungary)

„Seniors have been trained to become volunteer tourist guides in one of our counties." (Ms. Aija Rūse, Latvia)

„Improvement of the Regional Program for Ageing Society 2014-2020 in Warmia Mazury Region has been done." (Ms Małgorzata Samusjew, Poland)

Full text of Final Conference summary as well as presentations of speakers are available **here**

The European Commission Senior Tourism Initiative

Written by European Commission, Enterprise and Industry Directorate-General, Tourism Policy Unit

Thanks to Lisbon Treaty, the European Commission (EC), in cooperation with the Member States and associations representing the sector, has invested considerable effort in implementing a series of actions intended to strengthen European tourism and its competitiveness.

In line with its **2010 Communication on tourism** (COM(2010)352 final 30.06.2010), the EC proposes to carry out tourism actions with a high European added value, overcoming the seasonal nature of demand by enhancing an extension of the tourism season through the facilitation of transnational tourism flows in the low season.

If we consider the general travel market trends, a clear yearly picture of travel concentration within a few months generates a lack of competitiveness along the rest of the year. Thus, extending the season could be the beginning of a virtuous cycle of improvement.

Since 2009, in the framework of the initiative "**Calypso - tourism for all**", the Commission co-financed 10 transnational projects, involving 17 Member States plus Serbia and Montenegro, aiming at developing transnational low season exchanges for the most vulnerable target groups (youths, people with disabilities, and families with low income).

In 2012, the European Commission initiated the **"Calypso+"** idea, drawing special attention to the **senior group** which has demonstrated to have the greatest potential for the European tourism in terms of further growth development and job generation.

Vice-President Antonio Tajani asked the EU Ministers in charge of tourism for their support of an ambitious action aiming at reinforcing collaboration among Member States, encouraging senior citizens to travel in Europe during the low season, as a concrete measure to face the special economic situation.

The EC launched in June 2013 the first **Call for proposals** dedicated to senior tourism with a positive response of 58 accepted submissions and every EU28 and some non EU countries participating.

The general positive feedback and the strong political support led the Commission to join efforts and engage tourism authorities at regional and national level, as well as industry and senior organisations, in a stronger public-private partnership initiative: **"Europe, the best destination for seniors"** to increase low/medium tourism flows for senior tourists within European countries and from third countries (Brazil, USA and China during the pilot phase).

A **public questionnaire**, launched in September 2013, has been addressed to the main stakeholders across Europe, covering 23 Member States, Turkey and 6 EU associations. More than 95% of the respondents expressed their willingness to participate in a common European programme to increase senior travel flows.

After different workshops and the voluntary support of a pool of 20 experts, the Commission elaborated a **Report:** *"Facilitating cooperation mechanisms to increase senior tourists' travels within Europe and from third countries in the low and medium seasons"*. This Report is intended to be a practical document providing existing knowledge base of the senior tourism market, with a particular emphasis on the seniors' main characteristics, the tourism product development, the opportunities offered by third countries' markets, along with governance and financing opportunities. The overall objective is to set up recommendations for strategic actions, identifying the role that different actors might play in their implementation. *(Continue on next page)*

In this sense, the Report will be annexed by an **Action Plan** and the Commission will set up an "**European Senior Tourism Initiative Board-EUSTIB-**" for the period 2014-2016, which will ensure the transversal guidance, coordination and monitoring of the activities undertaken under this Action plan.

Moreover, the Commission has set up an inter-service group on the "silver economy" to explore collaboration synergies and draft a common narrative within different EU Commission policies or initiatives on active and healthy ageing.

Finally, the EC envisages to strengthening the financial support up to 1.8 M€ through a new **Call for Proposals under the COSME Program for 2014** published on 10 October 2014 http://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/cos-tflows-2014-3-15, to increase transnational tourism flows in the low/medium seasons for senior and also exploring more in depth the youth market, with the same aim of facilitating transnational mobility and fostering public-private partnerships.

More information:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/tourism-seniors/index_en.htm

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
ENTERPRISE AND INDUSTRY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
Tourism Policy Unit

TOURAGE has been evaluated as one of most sustainable tourism projects in Europe: project presented in PESTO conference in Austria

TOURage
Every age is tour age

pesto
Promotion and Networking of EU Projects on Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is responsible for about 15 million jobs in Europe and is therefore one of the most important economic branches, with impact on culture, social issues and the environment. At the same time it is becoming more and more important to limit, or rather avoid, the possible negative effects of tourism on the environment and regional culture. Sustainability is becoming the critical success factor in the tourism industry.

E.N.T.E.R. - European Network for Transfer and Exploitation of EU Project Results in cooperation with Steiermark Tourismus organized PESTO conference in Graz, Austria on 02-03 October 2014. The 'PESTO' Conference provided an ideal platform for target groups and stakeholders to address not only important topics regarding sustainable tourism, but also to gain information about 20 selected good practice projects related to it.

TOURAGE was one of these selected good practice projects in the field of sustainable tourism. It was presented by the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Regional Development and Environmental Management Agency as Component 3 leader. The event was a good opportunity to present our results on senior tourism in Europe. Our project highlighted that we are living in an ageing society. TOURAGE pointed out the importance of offers in tourism for seniors that can be considered as an effective tool to increase the number of visitors.

During the event, other participants presented specific tourism offers, such as national parks. A discussion raised on how different projects can work together in the future and share their results with each other. It was mentioned that TOURAGE Good Practice brochure involves few good practices for seniors, which can be used by national parks from all over Europe.

Participants were interested in the continuation of TOURAGE project, because most of them realized that special offers for seniors are a must in this ageing society.

TOURAGE invites you to visit http://www.pesto-project.eu/

Visit to the Republic of Karelia

Boats bring tourists to Kizhi Island

At the beginning of September TOURAGE lead partner travelled to Petrozavodsk in the Republic of Karelia to meet regional decision makers and actors in tourism business. The aim was to discuss the results of TOURAGE project, map cooperation possibilities and network. During these visit, TOURAGE project representatives had a meeting with Karelia ENPI CBC programme in the Petrozavodsk Branch Office. The Karelia ENPI CBC Programme is a cross-border cooperation programme between the regions of Kainuu, Oulu and North Karelia in Finland and the Republic of Karelia in Russia. The programme has financed several projects under the theme of tourism cooperation. Another meeting was arranged with the State Committee for Tourism of the Republic of Karelia.

It was clear that both quarters are interested in the possibilities offered by senior tourism as a theme is also very suitable cross-border tourism development. In addition, TOURAGE met the representatives of Kizhi State Open-Air Museum who told about the museums activities, its services and visitors. Many senior tourists visit the Kizhi State Open-Air Museum because of its history and beautiful architecture. The museum has a lot of potential for senior tourism development. After the meeting TOURAGE representatives were taken to a tour around the Kizhi Island where they heard more about the history and traditions connected to the place.

The visit in Petrozavodsk and Kizhi Island shows that the Republic of Karelia has a lot to offer for senior tourists. The region has beautiful nature, cultural activities and historical sights. TOURAGE good practices and the results of the senior surveys were disseminated. Hopefully they will be widely used when developing cross-border tourism between

Sharing results in the International Congress in Greece

On 31st of October 2014, TOURAGE project was invited to participate in the International Congress "New Technologies in the service of tourism", which was held in Alexandroupolis, Greece. The Congress was organized by the project „JTI Target", implemented by Region of East Macedonia & Thrace. During the event a lot of interesting and useful knowledge was spread around the audience to point out certain rules how to improve regional tourism and to achieve results that satisfy tourists, tourism entrepreneurs and also regional municipalities.

It was stated that regional planning is a very important step towards successful tourism development in the regions and that may include choosing seniors as a one of the target groups as well. That means not creating special offers just for the senior tourists but develop tourism products in a way they are useable for everybody, including for seniors.

TOURAGE invites you to visit: http://jtitarget.eu/en/

TOURAGE transferring good practices and developing Implementation plans

Diputación de Granada
Granada es Provincia

Integrated work brings success to Granada region

Granada is a province with a great tourism potential, and it has excellent environmental conditions to star up this kind of project. In this province are located 4 Natural Parks, a National Park (Bio-sphere Reserve) and high level of Astronomical Observatories (Observatory of Sierra Nevada, Observatory of La Alpujarra, Observatory of Parque de las Ciencias). The County Council of Granada is interested in the development of the astro-tourism sector as a competitive and sustainable tourism product.
"Carpathian Sky-Development of tourism products based on astronomy in the region of Slovak-Polish border (Presov Region, Slovakia)" has been the good practice selected to be transferred among all others because Granada has an incipient astro-tourism business sector that works in a separate way. This good practice is an example of an integrated work (joint work among private and public sector) and it has been very appreciated by us.

HOW:
May 2014: Organization of Participatory Workshops, where the County Council of Granada could work jointly with the businesses of rural tourism sector, after being informed about Tourage Project, the possible transfer of some good practices identified along the project. The participants chose to be imported the good practice identified by our Slovak partners "Carpathian Sky-Development of tourism products based on astronomy in the region of Slovak-Polish border (Presov Region, Slovakia)".
July 2014: 1) Meeting with Astronomical Society of Granada, The County Council of Granada presented a report about TOURAGE Project and the good practice to be transferred. As well as the level of development of astro-tourism product in Granada province and also the most important parts for transferring were analysed. 2) Meeting with the entrepreneurs of the tourism sector that develop this product. During this meeting the most interesting parts of the good practice to be transferred were identified:

- Map of the sky of the province.
- Special training programmes in astronomy.
- Thematic routes with information points.
- Specialized guides in astronomy.

The entrepreneurs agreed to develop a joint work to take forward these new initiatives in order to improve their businesses and approach to be more competitive.
September 2014: Meeting with the Tourism sector and Regional Scientific Institutions. During the last meeting, the selected themes formed a new project idea related to astro-tourism. The principal aim is the transformation of the province in an astro-tourism destination at national and international level.

Implementation Plan has been elaborated in order to collect the most interesting results of the information obtained during the project. (Results of the territorial analysis and questionnaires, the good practices transferred both Imported as exported)
The last section is related to the Structured Plan of future actions in the field of senior tourism sector in the province.

TOURAGE supported senior tourism development in North Karelia

*Tourists from Germany hiking in Petkeljärvi, North Karelia; Photo by **Heikki Hamunen***

The project has contributed to the development of senior tourism in North Karelia and its future prospects in various ways. An important step was taken when Tourism Operational Programme 2014 - 2020 of North Karelia was approved by the Administrative Board of Regional Council in October 2014. During the preparations of the programme TOURAGE representatives **emphasized the importance of senior tourism and its growth prospects**. In the approved programme it is stated that North Karelia **will develop senior tourism marketing and product development for senior groups especially focusing on low and medium seasons**. This means that the region will invest in senior tourism development in future too.

Development of marketing started already in 2013 when North Karelian stakeholders identified several good practices from North West Region, Ireland, relating to **of services and products for seniors.** Regional Council of North Karelia adopted some parts of these different practices and started to develop online marketing for the senior tourist together with Karelia Expert Tourism Service Ltd. The objective is to collect for example products, activities and accommodation that are seen to be interesting for seniors under the same concept on **www.visitkarelia.fi**. The content was planned by using the results of the senior surveys that where conducted during the TOURAGE project and by organizing workshops for the experts and seniors. Development of the concept will continue after the project ends.

In addition to these development activities, the TOURAGE project has networked actors that are interested in the development of senior tourism and has provided a platform for spin-off activities. As a result, the region has become more aware of the possibilities of senior tourism and more prepared to accommodate the needs of senior tourists.

Good practice transfer in Lake Balaton Region

Lake Balaton Development Coordination Agency has targeted to change the bad habit of elderly generation in the field of active and healthy lifestyle. According to this purpose the chosen good practice for transferring is the Senior Games good practice presented by Euro Baltic Region from Poland. The idea was that the Agency will use an existing sport event series - called **"Move Balaton"** - as a base of the transfer. "Move Balaton" programme contains many beach sport competitions but the event is attractive mainly for youth. Move Balaton programme is located in 32 different beaches around Lake Balaton and this is a whole summer event. On the closing event all the 32 locations are represented by sport teams. (...)

(Continue on next page)

In the „Move Balaton 2014" more than 3000 seniors participated actively

In the summer of 2014 this sport event series were extended with a few **sport disciplines for elderly people**. These disciplines were penalty kicking, throwing basketball penalty and table tennis. We tried to involve the older generations into the programme with this not too physical sport disciplines. The results of this pilot action were more impressive than it was expected. **More than 10% of the participants were +45, it means almost 3000 people**. More then 30% of the locations were represented by elderly sport teams on the closing event.

We hope that these numbers will be raised on the next summers and we will be able to offer active rest for the elderly people on the beaches.

Seniors have become an important target group in Vidzeme Planning region

During the project Vidzeme Planning Region chose two good practices from the partnership to transfer in the region. In the result of one good practice transfer, after 2 months intense trainings, **14 seniors in Amata county became volunteer tourist guides**. The good practice transfer was inspired by a cultural volunteers programme which has been implemented in the Science Park in the region of Granada, Spain. In cooperation with Amata Tourism information center, volunteer tourist guides have been included in a special tourist guides` list to be available to join tourist groups and apart from the most popular tourism objects, invite people to explore local history and nature values accompanied by stories full of personal experiences. Three models were developed to train seniors – based on skills, history and interpretation knowledge and performance.

Another good practice transfer touched importance of accessibility in tourism, when in the end of August 2014, **seminar for accessibility in tourism attractions** in Līgatne surroundings was organized and an expert on accessibility from Finland, Mr.Timo Ekroos was involved both to give knowledge about the issue as well as make observations in the nature trails. Idea to highlight accessibility in the Vidzeme region came from the Finland, when colleagues from North Karelia introduced TOURAGE partnership with the good practice „Accessible Nature Tourism". After the accessibility seminar, **recommendations** how to improve trail access were prepared and given to the municipality of Ligatne for **future reconstruction works**. Experience and knowledge gained about providing access to natural objects and trails will be applicable for their owners, operators and entrepreneurs to ensure daily maintenance of the sites, reconstruction of infrastructure and site improvement work, as well as for the creation of new nature-based tourism offers. Sustainable implementation of further steps of both practices as well as other suggestions for support of **seniors will be integrated in the mid-term policy document and long term development strategy of the Vidzeme Planning region** by the end of 2014. See more photos here

About TOURAGE

The project has grown out from the idea that although Demographic Change brings many challenges it can also bring opportunities to the regions. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the Europe and relatively remote regions have both a lot of unexploited and unknown development potential in this regard. The project seeks to identify good practices on developing tourism possibilities for growing segment of elderly travelers. More about the project find **here**

- Regional Council of North Karelia Lead Partner Finland
- Bourgas Regional Tourist Association Bulgaria
- Region of East Macedonia & Thrace Greece
- Lake Balaton Development Coordination Agency Hungary
- Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Regional Development and Environmental Management Agency Hungary
- West Regional Authority Ireland
- Vidzeme Planning Region Latvia
- Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic Poland
- Podkarpackie Region Poland
- County Council of Granada Spain
- Regional Development Agency of the Prešov Self-Governing Region Slovakia

Thank you!

You are reading the final newsletter of the TOURAGE project. It can be concluded that the project has been very successful and many partner regions have found new solutions to improve tourism sector in their regions and, very importantly, the project has brought new ideas to other European regions as well. As an example, the project was selected among the 20 best European tourism projects that support sustainable development and it had a possibility to cooperate with the European Commission relating to Senior Tourism Initiative. The partners have experienced a lot together during the past three years and it is evident that the cooperation between the regions will continue also in the future. Thank you for following the project and let's not forget the importance of senior tourism!

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